If they had fired before he won the woods they might have brought him down as he had brought down that rabbit the afternoon before, But, oddly enough, they forebore, and with a shout of defiance he gained the forest path and was speeding like a stag to-

ward Bear mountain.

An hour later he dropped exhausted upon the ground inside his cave. It was a bear's hole, cunningly hidden on the mountain side. Among that waste of burned-over pine stumps none could hit upon it save by accident, and that Ben did not anticipate. It was not fear that made him pant like a marathon runner, but wrath and self-contempt.

Mollie was a traitress! He had been fooled by a chit of a girl, for whose sake he had suffered two years in the penitentiary. Anger overcame all other feelings. He would show her! He would show them! What should

he do?

For an hour he lay thinking, gnawing his lip in rage. His passion for her had been so strong, his love so large a part of his existence, that the revulsion was terrible. He must contrive some punishment commensurate with the crime. Among the hill women there could be none other so base as to betray her lover, as Mollie had sought to betray him. He had recognized one of the men in the parlor as Frank Merriman, the sheriff. He had been a suitor for Mollie's hand before she promised herself to Ben. Doubtless he had persuaded her.

Ha! He has his plan. It flashed into his brain ready-forged in the furnace of his wrath. Doubtless Merriman would be at her home the following night. Her father, the bedridden old man, would be helpless. He would steal in and shoot the man before Mollie's eyes—and then—then—cut off her hair, leaving her to the derision of the hill folk.

His plan consumed him. He passed the outstanding hours like a man in a delirium. Day dawned, the sun blazed woon the wild-eyed man who paced to and fro upon the mountain side. The shadows lengthened as the sun declined; at last the fiery orb touched the horizon. Shouldering his rifle he marched doggedly through the scrub until once more he saw Mollie's cabin outlines against the darkening alty upon the further ridge. Even as he watched a tiny spark flashed out from the parlor candle.

An hour later he was lying upon his stomach outside the cabin. Inside he saw Frank Merriman, smoking in one corner. Mollie was laying the supper table. Occasionally she stopped before the sheriff and seemed to plead with him. Ben gritted his teeth.

If only Merriman would lay aside his rifle. But he kept his clasp of it even at the supper table; it was only later when he arose that he placed it for a moment against the mud wall. The watcher knew that his time had come. Mollie's hands were on Merriman's arm and she was pleading very earnestly. Ben fancied that she was crying.

He sprang to his feet and rushed through the open door. He saw indistinctly; the world was revolving in a fiery mist, through his weapon. Next moment, too enraged to fire, Ben had dropped his rifle and his hands were on the sheriff's throat.

To and fro they wrestled. The table was knocked down. The clumsy chairs went spinning across the room. The candle was dashed to the floor, and in the bewildering night each only knew that he was fighting for life with an implacable adversary. Ben dug his knuckles into the hollow space between the point of the law and the great cord behind the earan old woodsman's trick, to compress the carotid and produce unconsciousness. He felt his enemy weakening. He had him at his mercy now. Suddenly a tremendous blow fell upon his head from behind. He heard the shivering of the cheap rifle stock, flung out his hands, felt for some stable hold in the encompassing darkness, and tumbled to the ground.